

CITIZEN'S ADVISORY MEETING

October 27, 2011

The meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee was called to order by Chairman Brian Denniston at 7:10 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Chairman. Attendance was taken. There were 20 people present. The minutes of the last meeting were read and accepted.

Marie Edwards of the Dispute Resolution Center on 280 Broadway spoke about her program. Its mission is to promote the peaceful resolution of conflict. It is funded by the NY State Unified Court System's Community Dispute Centers Programs, the Orange and Sullivan County Youth Bureaus, the Office of Children and Family Services, NYS CASA and the NYS Department of State. Some of the programs and services are Parents Apart, Custody/Visitation Mediation and Elder Mediation among others.

The main focus of our meeting was to inform people about the Charter Review Commission and to discuss two proposals: a Ward System as well as stricter guidelines for the City Manager position. There were five members of the Charter Review Commission present at the meeting, Brigidanne Flynn, Charles Woodard, Mary Ann Prokosch, Pauline Dillard and Barbara Smith.

Mary Ann Prokosch got things started as she spoke about the Ward Proposition. In order for each ward to have their own representative the City of Newburgh would be divided into four distinct wards. Three members would still be elected at-large, the mayor and two council members.

She further spoke of the turnover the City has seen in the City Manager position, stressing the importance of having more accountability for the hiring and firing for this position as well as the need to have a permanent person fill the position. She also said that we had to take positive steps to move the City in a positive direction and these are the two key steps to help us get there.

There were some people in the audience who did not agree with the Charter Review Commission and raised some questions. Gary Ferguson said he didn't see any improvement in how we elect the council. José Ramirez said that 40% of city is represented. Such concerns as the Ward system not being the cure for the real ills the City faces (drugs, gangs and crime), increased numbers on the Council not translating to proficiency, and doubts about the supposed balance a Ward System would ensure were brought up.

Charter member Barbara Smith elaborated upon the ward system's advantages. Each section of the City will have someone to represent the needs of the community, she said. They need to work as a team to balance everything. Other Charter Commission members discussed the two propositions on the ballot next week.

We broke for refreshments at 8:05 p.m. The meeting called back to order at 8:30 p.m.

We had a discussion about trash. Frances Cott brought up trash receptacles and how you cannot maintain them without having a litter police. The cost of 50 receptacles is \$650 apiece.

Brian Denniston made a motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Mary Keller,
Secretary